DIVORCES IN QUEENSLAND, 1956.

During 1956, 708 marriages were dissolved in Queensland by legal proceedings. This number was 95 less than the total for 1955. The 1955 total was higher than usual, and the latest year's total was about the same as those for most of the years since 1947 when the post-war peak of divorces had passed.

Returns supplied by the Registrars of the Supreme Courts show that, during the year 1956, 703 divorce decrees were made absolute, and 5 marriages were declare annulled. One petition was dismissed.

Although the number of dissolutions of marriage has decreased from the very high level reached towards the end of the last war and during the early post-war years, the 1956 total was over three times the usual pre-war number.

The tables which follow show (Table 1) comparative figures for 1941 (before the war-time increase in divorces took place), 1946 (when divorces reached their greatest number), and the last 5 years, classified according to specified features of the dissolution proceedings or of the dissolved marriage; and (Table 2) 1956 dissolutions at various periods of marriage classified by ages of wives at marriage and by religious denominations.

Petitioners and Grounds of Dissolution (see Table 1).

Dissolutions during 1956 were granted on the petitions of 341 husbands, while in 367 cases wives were the petitioners. Wives were thus slightly in the majority as petitioners, accounting for 51.8 per cent. of the total. Before the last war, petitions were almost equally divided between husbands and wives, but from 1942 to 1948 more petitions were by husbands, whose share of all petitions reached a peak of 60.2 per cent. in 1944. From 1950 to 1953, wives instituted the majority of proceedings, averaging 54.3 per cent. of the total during those four years, but in the last three years, petitions have been fairly evenly divided between both parties.

Desertion was the ground of 478, or 67.5 per cent., of the 1956 dissolutions, while adultery accounted for 214, or 30.2 per cent. The remaining 16 dissolutions included 9 divorces on account of insanity, and 5 annulments of marriage. Before the last war, desertion ranked slightly above adultery as a cause of dissolution, but at the end of the war for two years, 1944 and 1945, adultery took first place, accounting for 56.3 per cent. of the 1944 total. Desertion again increased its share of the total up to a maximum of 76.1 per cent. in 1950, since when it has decreased a little but generally has accounted for nearly 70 per cent. of all causes of dissolution.

Duration of Marriage and Ages of Wives at Marriage (see Tables 1 and 2).

More marriages are broken when the couples have been married between 5 and 10 years than in any other quinquennium of married life. This period accounted for nearly one-third of the 1956 dissolutions. Next was the 10 to 15 years period, accounting for about one-quarter of the total. There has been little change since the war in the distribution of dissolutions amongst the various periods of married life; but, compared with pre-war conditions, a marked change has occurred by the replacement of the 10 to 15 years period, which was the commonest time for dissolution, by the earlier period of 5 to 10 years. Dissolutions of relatively new marriages reached a high level in 1944 when 17.5 per cent. of the total divorces were of persons married less than five years, but this proportion gradually fell again and in 1956, at 5.7 per cent. of the total, was approximately at its pre-war proportion.

Ages of divorced wives at marriage can be best compared with average ages at marriage in the case of dissolutions within the first five years of marriage, as during that period mortality will not have seriously affected the number of existing marriages. Among these early divorces in 1956, 43.6 per cent. of the wives had been married as minors, compared with only 33.2 per cent. of minors among the brides of the previous five years. Brides from 21 to 25 years accounted for 23.1 per cent. of the divorces, compared with 35.1 per cent. of the marriages; brides from 25 to 30 years, 10.2 per cent. of the divorces and 15.0 per cent. of the marriages; brides from 30 to 35 years, 7.7 per cent. of the divorces and 6.2 per cent. of the marriages; and brides of 35 years and over, 15.4 per cent. of the divorces and 10.5 per cent. of the marriages. Thus marriages of

very young brides appear to have been more frequently broken within the early years of marriage than those of brides in their middle twenties. Again there was a tendency for women married at higher ages, particularly in their late thirties, to be more likely than those married in their twenties to be involved in divorce in the earlier years of marriage. For dissolutions at later durations of marriage it is not possible to make similar direct comparisons because of the effect of mortality in changing the proportions of brides of various ages in existing marriages, but at all durations it was clear that very young brides accounted for more than their fair share of divorces. Among all 1956 divorces, 294, or 43.2 per cent., of the wives had been married at under 21 years of age.

Ages of Petitioners at Time of Dissolution (see Table 1).

Of 341 husbands who obtained dissolution in 1956, 175, or over half, did so before they were 40 years of age, while of the 367 wives who were the petitioners, 231, or nearly two-thirds, were under 40. The average age of husbands making petitions was 40.6 years, and of wives making petitions 37.0 years, the difference of about 3½ years being about the same as the average difference in ages of persons married. There is thus no apparent indication of husbands tending to institute divorce proceedings at an earlier or later stage of married life than wives do.

Children of Dissolved Marriages (see Table 1).

In 234, or one-third, of the marriages dissolved in 1956, there were no children. There was one child in 182 cases, or one-quarter of the total, and in almost as many cases, 162, there were two children. In less than 20 per cent. of all the dissolutions were there 3 or more children.

These proportions have not varied greatly over the past 16 years since the particulars first became available, with the exception of the period at the end of the last war when divorces of childless couples became relatively more numerous, rising to 36.9 per cent. of the total in 1944, and 36.6 per cent. in 1946.

Religious Denominations (see Tables 1 and 2).

Divorces, &c. granted in 1956, classified according to the religious denominations under which the original marriage services were celebrated, were as follows:- Church of England, 221; Roman Catholic, 112; Presbyterian, 116; Methodist, 116; Baptist, 16; Lutheran, 10; Congregational, 7; and other denominations, 37. Civil marriages by Registrars accounted for 63 dissolutions, and for 10 the denomination of the original ceremony was not stated.

During 1956, Church of England marriages accounted for 31.7 per cent. of all marriages dissolved, compared with 29.0 per cent. of all marriages which were celebrated in that Church during the past 25 years. Roman Catholic marriages provided 16.0 per cent. of the total divorces, which was well below the 22.7 per cent. of all marriages during the past 25 years originating in the Roman Catholic Church.

Divorced Persons Remarried.

In 1956, 1,018 divorced persons were remarried, compared with 1,098 in the previous year. The 1956 total included 476 men and 542 women, the men being equivalent to 67 per cent. of the new divorcees (708) created by the Courts during the year, while the women were equivalent to 77 per cent. of the newly-made women divorcees. During the ten-year period ended 1956, over two-thirds of the husbands divorced contracted another marriage, and over three-quarters of the wives were remarried. Until 1946, more male than female divorcees were remarried each year, but since that year the females have always been more numerous. During the ten years ended 1946, the 5,302 divorced persons who were remarried included 332 more bridegrooms than brides, but among the 11,319 divorcees who were parties to the marriages of the ten years ended 1956 there was an excess of 519 females.

Of all marriages registered during 1956, 887 included divorced persons as bridegroom, bride, or both parties. Both bridegroom and bride were divorcees in 131 marriages, while the divorced partner was the bridegroom in 345 marriages and the bride in 411 marriages. The majority of these marriages were performed according to the rites of the Presbyterian (358) and Methodist (260) Churches and by civil officers (144). Such marriages formed 44.3 per cent. of the total number of marriages performed by civil officers, while the corresponding proportions for Presbyterian and Methodist marriages were 19.4 and 16.4 per cent. respectively. Two Church of England marriages (0.1 per cent. of that Church's total) and 26 Roman Catholic marriages (1.1 per cent.) included, as bridegroom, bride, or both partners, divorcees who were eligible for marriage according to church law. For other denominations the percentages of marriages which involved divorcees were:- Congregational, 25.3; Salvation Army, 14.2; Church of Christ, 11.6; Baptist, 8.7; Lutheran, 7.3; and Other Christian, 4.7.

S. E. SOLOMON,
GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN.

BRISBANE.

12th April, 1957.

Table 1 - Divorces, &c., Queensland, 1941, 1946, and Last 5 Years.

	1941.	1946.	1952.	1953.	1954.	1955.	1956.
Type of Dissolution.							
Divorce Decree Absolute	247	1,154	705	725	710	801	703
Nullity of Marriage ..	6	7	6	5	4	2	5
Judicial Separation ..	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total	255	1,162	711	730	714	803	708
Petitioner.							
Husband	131	659	303	331	362	385	341
Wife	124	503	408	399	352	418	367
Grounds of Dissolution.							
Adultery	110	513	198	207	210	245	214
Desertion	135	624	502	514	489	545	478
Other	10	25	11	9	15	13	16
Duration of Marriage Until Dissolution.							
Under 5 Years	13	137	62	63	50	58	40
5 Years to 9 Years ..	65	401	225	255	219	268	225
10 " " 14 " ..	76	273	168	155	163	199	170
15 " " 19 " ..	46	149	116	112	113	124	120
20 " " 29 " ..	45	164	102	100	126	107	100
30 " " 39 " ..	9	37	30	42	37	34	39
40 " and Over ..	1	1	4	3	5	7	7
Not Stated	-	-	4	-	1	6	7
Age of Wife at Time of Marriage.							
Under 21 Years	113	522	306	347	320	351	294
21 Years to 24 Years ..	87	417	242	228	225	269	219
25 " " 29 " ..	30	144	87	89	83	111	97
30 " " 34 " ..	8	39	35	25	38	25	38
35 " and Over ..	10	23	28	35	41	29	33
Not Stated	7	17	13	6	7	18	27
Age of Petitioner at Time of Dissolution - (i) Wives.							
Under 25 Years	8	41	33	36	16	24	27
25 Years to 29 Years ..	21	94	91	85	70	100	65
30 " " 34 " ..	28	142	79	88	74	96	67
35 " " 39 " ..	27	86	74	58	67	71	72
40 " " 44 " ..	17	50	60	53	50	42	60
45 " " 49 " ..	12	42	40	37	38	44	31
50 " " 54 " ..	6	25	17	24	20	16	16
55 " " 59 " ..	1	10	7	7	6	11	8
60 " and Over ..	1	4	4	9	8	3	8
Not Stated	3	9	3	2	3	11	13
Age of Petitioner at Time of Dissolution - (ii) Husbands.							
Under 25 Years	2	27	7	4	7	8	2
25 Years to 29 Years ..	12	118	33	57	50	48	49
30 " " 34 " ..	29	168	58	56	62	77	69
35 " " 39 " ..	28	132	56	72	61	76	55
40 " " 44 " ..	19	86	55	46	60	57	45
45 " " 49 " ..	18	66	34	30	42	47	44
50 " " 54 " ..	13	31	23	37	37	38	27
55 " " 59 " ..	6	14	12	13	25	14	17
60 " and Over ..	2	9	14	11	14	14	19
Not Stated	2	8	11	5	4	6	14

Table 1 - Divorces,&c., Queensland, 1941, 1946, and Last 5 Years (continued).

	1941.	1946.	1952.	1953.	1954.	1955.	1956.
Children of Dissolved Marriages.							
No Child	74	425	204	220	218	232	234
1 Child	86	333	211	212	183	224	182
2 Children	50	201	155	163	164	190	162
3 Children	21	111	69	76	86	95	54
4 Children	8	43	45	37	35	32	42
5 Children or More ..	16	49	27	22	28	30	34
Religious Denomination of Dissolved Marriages.							
Church of England ..	Not Available.	Not Available.	251	232	227	226	221
Roman Catholic			110	109	128	116	112
Presbyterian			99	113	114	153	116
Methodist			115	129	120	146	116
Baptist			15	9	16	20	16
Lutheran			11	7	13	12	10
Congregational			10	12	8	8	7
Other Denominations ..			41	45	38	41	37
Registrars			51	72	44	70	63
Not Stated			8	2	6	11	10

Table 2 - Divorces, &c., Queensland, 1956 - Ages of Wives and Religious Denominations.

Particulars.	Duration of Marriage.					Total Divorces, &c.	Proportion of Total.	
	0-4 Years.	5-9 Years.	10-14 Years.	15-19 Years.	20 Years & Over.		Divorces, &c.	Marriages Celebrated.a
According to Age of Wife at Marriage.								
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	%	%
Under 21 Years ..	17	102	64	44	67	294	43.2	28.0
21 to 24 " ..	9	59	59	37	55	219	32.2	36.6
25 to 29 " ..	4	21	28	27	16	97	14.2	18.9
30 to 34 " ..	3	18	8	6	3	38	5.6	7.3
35 Years & Over ..	6	16	8	3	-	33	4.8	9.2
Not Stated ..	1	9	3	3	5	27	c	-
Total	40	225	170	120	146	708b	100.0	100.0
According to Religious Denomination of Marriage Ceremony.								
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	%	%
Church of England	10	62	62	33	54	221	31.7	29.0
Roman Catholic ..	4	32	35	19	21	112	16.0	22.7
Presbyterian ..	10	36	26	21	22	116	16.6	18.0
Methodist ..	6	41	25	20	24	116	16.6	16.5
Baptist	1	4	4	4	3	16	2.3	2.2
Lutheran	1	3	1	3	2	10	1.4	2.2
Congregational ..	-	3	2	1	1	7	1.0	1.4
Other Denominations	2	12	6	10	7	37	5.4	4.2
Registrars ..	6	30	8	9	10	63	9.0	3,8
Not Stated ..	-	2	1	-	2	10	c	-
Total	40	225	170	120	146	708b	100.0	100.0

a Marriages celebrated during 25 years, 1931 to 1955.
b Including 7 marriages of unspecified duration - Wives' Ages: 25-29, 1; not stated, 6; Denominations: Roman Catholic, 1; Presbyterian, 1; not stated, 5.
c Excluded from the total.